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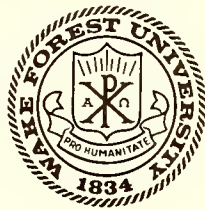
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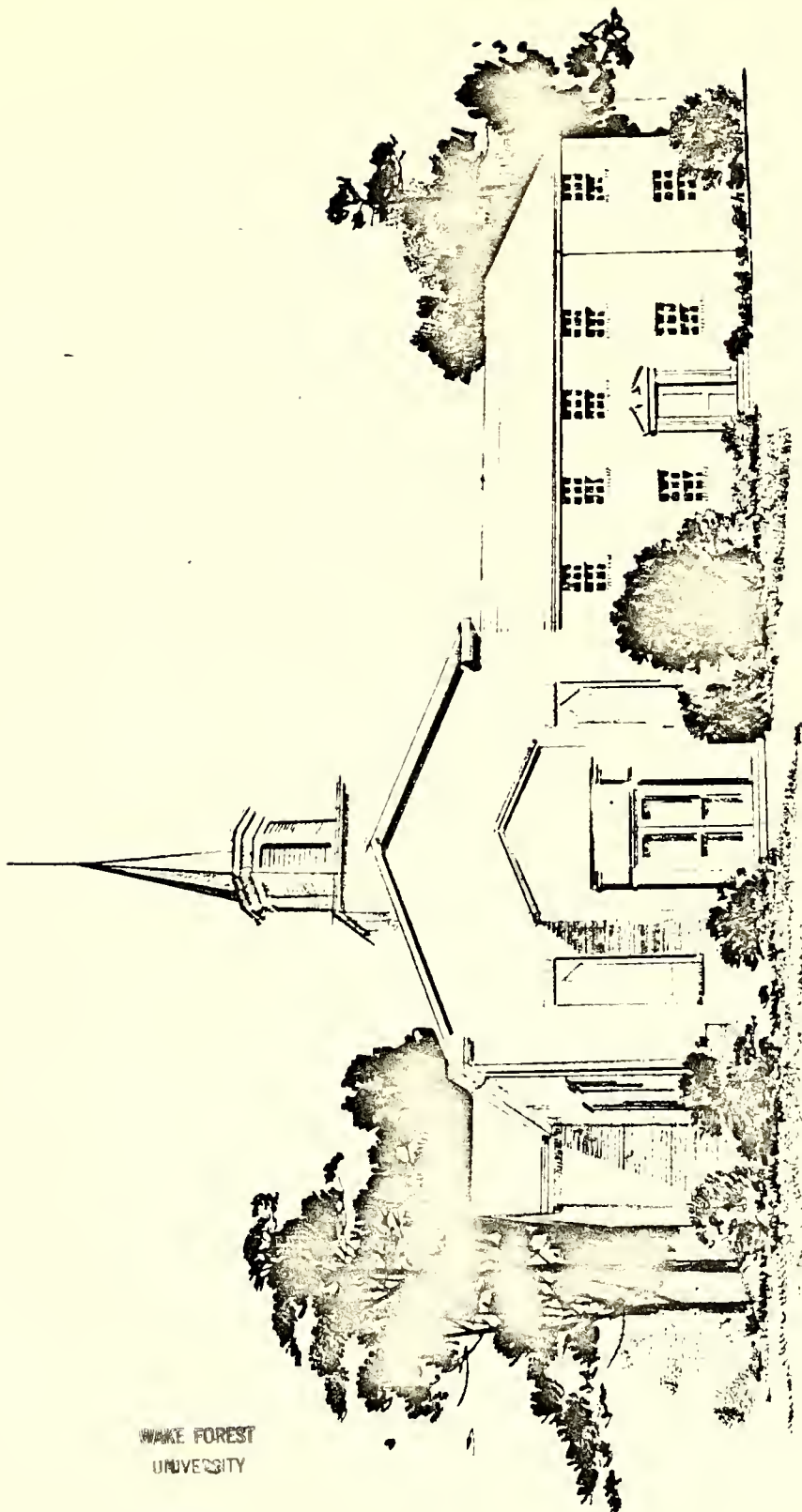




I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH  
A HISTORY OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
OF SNOW HILL, NORTH CAROLINA  
by  
Brightie E. White, Jr.

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"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter,  
and upon this rock I will build my church; and  
the gates of hell shall not prevail against  
it." --Matthew 16:18



## INTRODUCTION

Church history is a difficult subject. The history of a church is an even more difficult subject. The writing of a history for the First Baptist Church of Snow Hill has presented many problems. Foremost among these has been the division of the history into chronological periods. Church minutes have often become confused, and it sometimes has required textual criticism to arrive at an arrangement for this history.

Another major problem has been the location of source material. Few secondary references are in the paper, and the location of primary materials has been a tremendous task. The church minute books, three in number, have formed the main source of information. Associational and State Convention minutes from the middle of the nineteenth century have proven invaluable. Oral traditions and observed events gleaned from conversations with older members and a local Primitive Baptist historian have added to the material in this paper. Also books and papers on Baptist history have been used. State and local county histories complete the list of materials from which this paper has been drawn.

For further information an appendix has been attached to the paper containing tables of pastors, clerks, associations the church has been a member of, and associational reports at five year intervals.

There is a pleasure in being like Paul in covering ground where no others have gone and a sense of purposefulness in feeling oneself identified with Eusebius of Caesarea.



## I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH

The First Baptist Church of Snow Hill is a small church in a small town. Its history has no particular significance except that it is typical of so many other small churches in eastern North Carolina. The church was born during the missionary and anti-missionary controversy and struggled through the difficult days of the Civil War. It died and was resurrected like so many small churches. It has had its saints and its sinners as well as competent and incompetent ministers. Short pastorates and indifferent laymen have blighted its progress. Yet it has had strong periods of great activity only to lasp again into inactivity until the great awakening in the last few years. The church has been blessed in having competent clerks who have faithfully recorded and perserved the everyday events of church life and the significant decisions which were so influential in the history of the church.

Upon the stage of the First Baptist Church of Snow Hill we can see the drama of Baptist life in an agricultural setting through the action of those who have participated in the progress of Baptist history in eastern North Carolina.

The town of Snow Hill is located in Greene County in the heart of eastern North Carolina. "Greene has been an agricultural county since it was formed in 1791 from Dobbs County,"<sup>1</sup> and today fifteen thousand of its eighteen thousand people are farm-employed or farm-connected.<sup>2</sup> Though one of the smallest counties in the state, it is one of the richest agriculturally, yielding an abundant crop of tobacco as well as cotton and corn.<sup>3</sup>

Snow Hill with a population of about a thousand people is the county seat. There are three other small villages in this small county. Throughout its history Snow Hill has been a village removed from the main-stream





of North Carolina life, yet it has been within easy distance of the larger towns of Kinston, Goldsboro, Wilson, and Farmville. Evidence of this obscurity is seen in Archibald Henderson's voluminous history of North Carolina in which he makes only two reference to Snow Hill. One of these is about the Tuscarora Indian War in 1713<sup>4</sup> while the other is found in a listing of North Carolina towns in Reconstruction days in 1870: "In Greene County Snow Hill was a hamlet of 320."<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, Snow Hill and Greene County do have a note-worthy history. The land grant of King Charles II to Lord Granville in 1663 as one of the eight Lords Proprietors covered most of what is now Greene County.<sup>6</sup> A historical marker in the county courtyard reads in part:

This street in 1774 was the Southern boundary of Lord Granville's one-eight part of Carolina.

"It was about 1710 before a permanent settlement was established in this territory."<sup>7</sup> Settlers who came from Virginia and the Albermarle section were constantly harressed by the Tuscarora Indians.<sup>8</sup> In 1711 John Lawson, surveyor general for the king, was captured by the Indians and burned at their town of Catechna or Catechney, five miles south-west of the present town of Snow Hill.<sup>9</sup> In 1713 the colonials under Col. James Moore crushed the Tuscarora at their stronghold of Fort Nohoroco or Nohuche on the Cantentnea Creek near Snow Hill.<sup>10</sup> "The Tuscarora of North Carolina never recovered from this defeat."<sup>11</sup> Another part of the historical marker in the county courtyard reads:

Five miles south of Snow Hill, March 20-23, 1713, the Indians under Hancock suffered the severest blow ever experienced by them in North Carolina. The battle virtually ended the Tuscarora War and led to the emigration of the defeated Tuscaroras to New York.

Greene County was laid out in 1791 from the now extincty Dobbs County. It was first named for James Glasgow, Secretary of State. After Glasgow



was convicted of land fraud in 1799, the County was renamed after Revolutionary General Nathanael Greene.<sup>12</sup> The town of Snow Hill was founded in 1799 but not incorporated until 1855.<sup>13</sup> There is a legend that the Indians called the place where the town is now located Snow Hill. Another legend declares that the name of the Tuscarora Fort Nohoroco or Nocuche means snow hill.<sup>14</sup>

The first known record of religious institutions in Greene dates from 1740 when Joseph Pillmoor, who had been sent to New Bern by John Wesley, organized religious groups in the county on a preaching mission. In 1790 Greene County was placed on a Methodist circuit. The Snow Hill circuit was formed in 1808. There is evidence in 1844 that the Methodists were meeting in the county courthouse.<sup>15</sup>

It is claimed by the Primitive Baptists of this section that members of their faith were active in the county in the latter half of the eighteenth century.\* G. W. Pascal, historian of North Carolina Baptists, lists Great Contentne as an early Baptist church in Greene County as being founded in 1761.<sup>16</sup> He makes no comment about this church. Pascal also refers to a Greene County church as "that on Little Contentnea, know also by the name of Meadow, became active at this time (during the Revolution) and shortly after, in 1785, was constituted into a church with Elder Joshua Barnes as minister."<sup>17</sup> C. B. Hassell, Primitive Baptist historian, writes of "a church of Little Contentnea"<sup>18</sup> joining the Kehukee Association in 1791, and Pascal, probably following Hassell, identifies it as "Little Contentnea, Greene County."<sup>19</sup> Today this church is know as the Old Meadow Church and is Primitive Baptist.

An oral tradition testifies to the presence of a Baptist minister in Snow Hill as early as 1823. Joshua Mewborn, local Primitive Baptist historian and venerable leader, declares that his grandfather, Parrott



Mewborn, told him that his father before him had verified the presence of John Taylor, a Baptist minister living in Snow Hill in 1832, who later moved to Richmond.\*

Another Primitive Baptist church in the county which was founded early and still exists today in Mewborn's Primitive Baptist Church. It was named for the man who founded it in 1833.\* Throughout its history it seems to have adhered to rigid Primitive doctrines. Much of this faithfulness to the old way seems to be due to Parrott Mewborn, grandfather of the present pastor, Joshua Mewborn, and a prominent Baptist leader in this section at that time. Abram and Henry Swinson, father and son, were also Baptist preachers in this section in the first half of the nineteenth century. Abram is reported to have learned toward Primitive doctrines while Henry was on the missionary side.\* In the minutes of the Union Association for 1844<sup>20</sup> and the next few years, Henry Swinson is listed as a minister and his residence is given as Snow Hill. Thus there were Baptist influences in the town before the middle of the century and possibly some kind of Baptist group.

Meanwhile in North Carolina the Baptist State Convention was organized in Greenville in 1830 "for the primary purpose of giving the gospel to North Carolina"<sup>21</sup> through an educated ministry and a missionary emphasis. These two doctrines were emphatically opposed by Primitive Baptist like those in Greene County who held to hyper-calvinistic predestination. Joshua Lawrence, Primitive Baptist leader, "made a powerful speech denouncing what he called 'speculation on the gospel and religious societies of every kind!'"<sup>22</sup> An association under Primitive influence voted its "irreconcilable hostility to Bible Societies, Missionary Societies, Temperance Societies, Tract Societies, Baptist Conventions, and Religious Newspapers."<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the Baptist State Convention continued its



efforts in education and missions. In 1845 the Southern Baptist Convention was formed in Augusta, and "Southern Baptists profited in the division because they were able to give more attention to bettering their own section."<sup>24</sup> In affiliation with the State and Southern Conventions, Missionary Baptists in eastern North Carolina began an invasion to wrestle that section free from its bonds of Primitivism, ignorance, and spiritual destitution.

In Greene County, however, around the middle of the century Primitive Baptists were active. There were at least two Primitive churches--Mewborn's and Meadow--and possibly some type of Baptist group in Snow Hill. However, there were some missionary influences. Henry Swinson, who lived in Snow Hill prior to 1850, was a cooperating minister with the missionary forces. An itinerate missionary of the Union Association, A. Jones, reported to the association in 1847 that he had "visited Snow Hill in Greene (County)."<sup>25</sup>

The Missionary Baptist Church in Goldsboro began an active phase in its history when it called Elder Harley Minor as its pastor for 1850. He came to Goldsboro from New York.<sup>26</sup> The minutes of the Union Association reveal the story of his activity in Greene County and Snow Hill. "Brother Minor was appointed to Goldsboro and surrounding county"<sup>27</sup> by the association. Minor seems to have become immediately interested in forming a work for the Missionary forces in Snow Hill. In the associational minutes of 1850 Minor reported that "he assisted in the organization of a church at Snow Hill, Greene County, at which place he baptized two; and he was quite encouraged at the prospect of success in his field of labor, which appeared to be ripening apace for a harvest."<sup>28</sup> At that same meeting Snow Hill was "received into the Association at this session, under favorable and encouraging auspices."<sup>29</sup>

The minutes of the "Baptist Church of Snow Hill",<sup>30</sup> written in the







beautifully flowing script of the first clerk, add details to the account found in associational records. On Saturday, January 5, 1850, Elder Minor assembled a council in Snow Hill to constitute some of the people he previously had worked with into a Baptist church. The council was composed to two other ministers in the association who were missionary in spirit-- J. M. C. Breaker and Jacob Utley--and "Brethern Jones and Wheeler."<sup>31</sup> Minor was elected moderator. Jonathon Wood and his wife Mary, Albert H. Dowell, John Joiner, Sr., and John Joiner, Jr. presented themselves before the council to become a Baptist church.<sup>32</sup> A church covenant was drawn up:

Having been, as we trust, brought by divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give up ourselves wholly unto him; we do now solemnly and joyfully covenant with each other, to walk together in Him with brotherly love to his glory as our common Lord.

We do, therefore, engage in his strength, that we will exercise a mutual care as members one of another, to promote the growth of the whole body, in Christian knowledge, holiness and comfort; to the end that we may stand perfect and complete, in all the will of God; that to promote and secure this object, we will uphold the public worship of God, and the ordinances of his house; and hold constant communion with each other therein; that we will cheerfully contribute of our property for the support of the poor and the maintenance of a faithful ministry of the gospel among us; that we will not omit closet and family religion, nor allow ourselves in the neglect of the duty of religiously training up our children, and those under our care, with a view to the service of Christ, and the enjoyment of heaven; that we will walk circumspectly in the world that we may win souls; remembering that God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and world, and the salt of the earth; and that a city set upon a hill cannot be hid:--

That we will frequently exhort, and if occasion require admonish one another, according to Matthew 18th, in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted, and that as in baptism, we have been buried with Christ and raised again, so there is on us a special obligation to walk--henceforth, in newness of life.

And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant make us perfect in every good work to do his will; working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, forever, and ever.--Amen.<sup>33</sup>



The New Hampshire Confession of Faith which was used by the Union Association at the time was adopted as the Articles of Faith for the church. Two of the articles are especially interesting in the context of the Primitive Baptist background in Greene County. Article 6 reads:

Of the freedom of Salvation.--The blessings of salvation are made free by the gospel; it is the immediate duty of all to embrace them by a cordial and obedient faith, and nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, except his own voluntary refusal to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ; which refusal will subject him to aggravated condemnation.<sup>34</sup>

Article 8 on election reads:

Of God's purpose of Grace.--Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which, he regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man; it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable; it utterly excludes boasting and promotes humility, prayer, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy; it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; it is ascertained by its effects in all who believe the gospel; it (is) the foundation of all Christian assurance, and to ascertain it with regard to ourselves, demands and deserves our utmost diligence.<sup>35</sup>

"The Council then recognized the brethren and sister as the Baptist Church of our Lord Jesus Christ in the town of Snow Hill, Greene County, N. C."<sup>36</sup>

After recognition by the council, a meeting of the church was held on the same day. "The Baptist Church of Snow Hill"<sup>37</sup> was adopted as the name of the church. Mrs. A. H. Dowell appeared before the church and related her Christian experience, asking to be received into the membership of the church. "Having conformed to our established usage by appearing and testifying to the church what the Lord had done for her soul, she was duly received as a candidate for baptism."<sup>38</sup> Elder Minor was called as pastor.

Johathan Wood and the junior Joyner were elected deacons, and A. H. Dowell was chosen clerk.<sup>39</sup> Dowell was also licensed to preach and to have a meeting "as often as practicable."<sup>40</sup>



On the next day, January 6, 1850, the first Sunday service of the church was held. The minutes read: "Agreeable to appointment meeting was held in the church at this place this morning at the usual hour."<sup>41</sup> This would seem to indicate that there was some type of meeting house and that regular services had been previously held. It may be that the reference to a church was to a Methodist church in the community or to one used by the churches jointly, as was the general custom in those days. Or there may have been some type of Baptist church building. The records of the past are all too often darkened by brevity and obscurity. Details which were common knowledge were not included in church records. However, the indication of previous meetings is probably a reference to the itinerate preaching of visiting Primitive and Missionary preachers. Preachers were scarce, and the whole community often turned out to hear one when he was in town. It would also seem that Minor had made previous contacts in Snow Hill and probably preached there before the organization of the church. Certainly there was some Baptist influence in the community because all the founding members of the church brought their letters with them.<sup>42</sup>

At the Sunday service Breaker preached the first sermon to the new church from Acts 2:37: "Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added daily unto the church such as such be saved." Next Pastor Minor gave a charge to the church. In flowing ascript and impressive words Clerk Dowell commented: "His charge was beautifully given, and feelingly received; may we endeavor to live conformably to the great truths presented to our consideration this memorable day; and at last be crowned with every blessing that is in store for those who love and obey the Saviour."<sup>43</sup>

For the next several years the young church has a hard struggle. A





faded record written by the clerk in July of 1851 declared: "The church has not been attended too faithfully for the past two years, and therefore we do not get on as smoothly as we ought."<sup>44</sup> In the Fall of 1851 the church reported to the Union Association: "Brethern, we are a feeble band. We are in love and unity, and enjoy peace. Elder H. Minor has been our pastor for the past year."<sup>45</sup> Meetings were infrequent, however, and in 1852 the clerk reported that during "the present or third year we have been without a shepherd, with no one to preach for us; and owing to the distance and indisposition of the males living so far from Snow Hill, we have had no regular meeting for a long past year."<sup>46</sup>

Johathan Wood and A. H. Dowell attended the Union Association Meeting for 1852 and "petitioned for letters of dismission to join the Pamlico Association."<sup>47</sup> At the Pamlico Association meeting the church "was promised to be supplied with a minister is so much as we are not able to employ one on account of fewness of members."<sup>48</sup> In a few days Elder J. D. Elwell, a missionary of the association, visited Snow Hill. Parrott Mewborn of Mewborn's Meeting House for Primitive Baptists was holding a meeting in Snow Hill at the time, and Elwell seems to have joined in with him. During the revival "the church held a meeting and concluded to call Bro. Parrott Mewborn as our pastor. Said invitation has been extended but he was not given a decided answer, though it is possible that he will serve."<sup>49</sup> According to Primitive Baptist tradition, Mewborn was doubtful of the theological validity of the church's position.\* Nevertheless, he decided to preach at Snow Hill, and a note adds: "Said pastor has accepted for one year and is now officiating for us."<sup>50</sup>

In the Spring of 1854 the church was again without a pastor.<sup>51</sup> Either Mewborn finished his yearly call or else left because he thought the church





too liberal in outlook. A meeting of the church was held at Dowell's home, and Minor who was present was unanimously called to be pastor again.<sup>52</sup> These are the last minutes recorded by A. H. Dowell, and a partially decipherable note in the list of members reveals that he moved his letter.<sup>53</sup> He seems to have been the leading spirit in the little church when it first began, and the care he took with the church minute book shows his devotion to his duty.

In 1856-57 Elder E. A. Best was preaching at the church and Jonathan Wood, the main lay leader, was clerk.<sup>54</sup> In the latter part of 1857 Elder H. Spivey was acting as pastor.<sup>55</sup> E. A. Brachum was called as pastor in 1858 to hold regular monthly meetings.<sup>56</sup> In 1859 Spivey was again holding services for the church.<sup>57</sup> In those difficult days when preachers were scarce, the minister who was nearest would preach for any group who would listen to him when he happened to be in the neighborhood. The associations employed several itinerate preachers with home-bases to travel among the churches and render periodic services. It seems that the custom was to change fields of labor every year or two. Churches also issued only annual calls which terminated with the end of the year. Transportation was difficult, and therefore church meetings were few. The Baptist Church in Snow Hill suffered greatly from lack of pastoral leadership in the first few years of its existence.

Spivey remained with the church for several years, and in 1860, the year the Southern States began to succeed from the Union, a frame one-room building was erected by the church. The early minutes of the church are largely concerned with those who were added to the church and with who the preacher was. No direct reference is made in the minutes about the building program, but it is recorded that John Joyner was asked "to



wait on Bro. M. Johnson & request him to give us a copy of his sermon preached on the 3rd Sabbath in August 1860 as the dedication sermon to have it printed in pamphlet form,--say 500 copys."<sup>58</sup> In the center of the old minute book there is an account of money received by Jonathan Wood for the building fund. The names of over a hundred people are recorded as giving money throughout 1860.<sup>59</sup> Many of these names are foreign to the church roll, and the name of Abram Swinson,<sup>60</sup> a Primitive Baptist preacher, indicates that all the people of the community were invited to contribute to the building of the new church as was the custom in those days. Jonathan Wood himself gave the largest gift recorded--\$100.00.<sup>61</sup> Further proof that this money was for a building is seen in a notation of disbursement: "May 2 Cash pay W Z Y Jones on Meeting House \$350.00"<sup>62</sup> In all \$1,581.25 was collected for the building, and \$1,573.75 spent.<sup>63</sup>

In July of 1861 Wood made his last entry as clerk of the church.<sup>64</sup> It is claimed by the Primitive Baptists that he left the Snow Hill Church to join the Mewborn's Primitive Baptist Church and that he is listed on their records as a member. It is said that others who were discontent with the Missionary viewpoint of the church joined with him in leaving under the influence of Parrott Mewborn.\* By now Mewborn was opposed to the views of the itinerate missionaries from the associations who had served the Snow Hill Church. Either some internal disturbance or the war is the cause of there being no entries in the minute book from 1861 to 1864.<sup>65</sup> Further evidence to the Primitive claim is seen in the fact that Wood's name in the list of members has two x's instead of the customary "dis." or "dead". The lines are made with the type of pencil used by the clerk in 1870.<sup>66</sup>

Wood had been one of the first members of the church and its leading lay leader for the last few years. His name is listed on the associational



records for years as the messenger for Snow Hill. In 1859 the church pledged \$20.00 for the support traveling preachers through the Itinerant Fund. The associational records show that Wood paid the amount himself.<sup>67</sup> He was the clerk of the church for many years as well as treasurer. His was a prominent family in the county, and his stately residence is still standing today near Snow Hill. His departure from the church must have been a serious loss. However, after this time there is **every indication that the church continued** in the Missionary trend of thought.

During the Civil War years there is only one entrance in the church minute book--that of October in 1864 dealing with a routine granting of letters of dismissal. J. R. Croom was clerk.<sup>68</sup> The Snow Hill Church must have suffered greatly as did the rest of the South during the war. The Minutes of the Pamlico Association in 1862 reveal the pathetic conditions: "No distinct idea of the spiritual condition of the churches of the Association can be arrived at, either from the letters sent or from the few delegates present. The affected state of our country, and especially of our Association territory, is such that no very cheering state of things can be expected."<sup>69</sup> Snow Hill was not represented at the associational meetings during the war years. In 1865 several churches in the association are reported "in enemy lines."<sup>70</sup> In that same year the enemy invaded the vicinity of Goldsboro "and for twenty miles round, the country was thoroughly plundered and stripped of food, forage, and private property of every description.... Generally not a live animal, nor a morsel of food of any description was left."<sup>71</sup> Greene County further suffered in the loss of men who had been in the Confederate Army. Of the one-hundred twenty-five who left Snow Hill in 1861, only forty returned in 1865.<sup>72</sup>

"The growing, prosperous North Carolina of 1861 lay defeated and ruined





in 1865. Only a terrible war could have worked such destruction in four short years,"<sup>73</sup> states a North Carolina historian. Evidence to support this historic information can be seen in the finances and activities of the Baptist Church in Snow Hill. In 1857 Pastor Brachum had received \$40.00 for a year's work,<sup>74</sup> and even in January of 1861 Pastor Spivey had received \$101.00.<sup>75</sup> The church had also erected a meeting house at the cost of nearly \$2,000.00. But after the war all this was changed. The church sent gifts of \$2.00<sup>76</sup> and later \$1.00 to the association.<sup>77</sup> The scanty minutes for the first years after the war deal with problems of discipline. One man was charged with drinking and another expelled for thievery. The church was again without a pastor for over a year when H. S. Spivey, who had served the church during the war years, resigned.<sup>78</sup>

The end of the war brought social changes as well as economic ones. It is interesting to note that in the years just before the Civil War Negroes were received into the membership of the church. "Joel Patrick Col(ored) came forward and related his Experience and was Received into the church & the Right hand of fellowship Extended. All so his wife Sealey Col(ored) woman was rec(eive)d"<sup>79</sup> and "Solomon and his wife Ella collard people came forward & both were rec(eive)d in the church for baptism."<sup>80</sup> In 1861 six were listed as "Collor Br & Sist"<sup>81</sup> who were members of the church. They were probably the slaves of some of the white members. The old building, according to those still living who remember it, had a balcony which was used by the slaves. After the Civil War there is no indication that there were still colored members of the church.

Church discipline is also an interesting feature of post-war Reconstruction days. An example is Joshua Potter who was a thorne in the flesh for the church, and his case is typical of many found in the small agricultural





churches of the time. In September of 1866 there was "a charge against Bro. J. W. Potter for taking of that did not belong to him."<sup>82</sup> The next month he was expelled from the church,<sup>83</sup> but must have soon been reinstated. In February of 1867 he was again in trouble and interrogated in a church trail,<sup>84</sup> but nothing was done about him. In the Fall of that year he was acting as moderator of a church conference,<sup>85</sup> probably due to the lack of capable male leadership. In 1868 the church found that again "the case of Bro. J. W. Potter came up for consideration. This brother has been the cause of much sorrow to the church."<sup>86</sup> This time he was accused of fraud in a prosperity deal. "When asked what he had to offer in answer to this grave charge, he replied substantially as follows: That he knew that he had done wrong, that he was deeply sorry for it, that he had prayed to God to forgive him, that he believed God had forgiven him, and he begged the church to do so too, that it was his desire to leave this part of the country, and to seek a home in the west; that if the brethren would or could pardon him of this offense and would grant him a letter of dismissal he would never stand in the way of the prosperity of the cause here anymore. Believing his repentance sincere, he was, by vote forgiven, and also dismissed by letter."<sup>87</sup> However, Potter seems not to have left, for in 1870 he was sent to the association by the church.<sup>88</sup>

A new era for the church began in November of 1867 when James H. Freeman of Wilson was called as pastor.<sup>89</sup> Soon another man from Wilson, a school-teacher named William B. Harrell, moved into the community. Not only did he teach school but also he saw the desperate need and apathetic condition of the little Baptist church in Snow Hill. What happened so impressed the clerk that he placed an account of the Snow Hill Sunday School started by Harrell in the minute book:



In January of this year (1868) Bro. Harrell moved with his family to Snow Hill from Wilson. The condition of the church at this place, he found to be anything but flourishing or prosperous. No prayer meetings, no Sunday School or Sunday services (except once month). Coldness and lack of interest in spiritual matters prevailed among Christians of every name in the community. The children of the village were entirely regardless of the Sabbath, and literally running wild on the Lord's Holy Day. A spirit of worldly mindedness seemed to hang like a mighty pall over the hearts of professing Christians in all the churches, and religion itself well-nigh extinct. Care for the children first moved this Brother's heart. Having opened a day school, he told the boys and girls, that he would on the next Sabbath, meet them at the Baptist church if any felt disposed to learn some beautiful songs which he would teach them if they would come out; and he urged them to tell their parents also, and request them to attend with them.

To make a long story short, the children came out promptly, and also their parents, and from this the number grew and increased until, at length, the Sunday School became the most popular place on the Sabbath morning, in the whole village. Citizens generally flocked to church on Sabbath day, and the House of God was thronged with earnest and deeply interested spectators of the manner of imparting instruction as pursued by Bro. Harrell; for the whole exercise was conducted by short lectures, questions and answers out of the Bible, reading from the New Testament first a verse of a chapter by Bro. Harrell, then in concert by the whole school; recitations from the Psalms or Gospels, and distributing of Sunday School papers to all the children....

The Sunday School having become more and more a place of resort for adults and many coming from the surrounding country with their children, the manager or superintendent took the opportunity, frequently to point a word directly to them in regard to the training of the young minds which God had committed to their care. That God would hold them to account for permitting their children to live in violation of His Holy Sabbath Day, as had been the custom here; and he exhorted them to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy, and see to it that their children did likewise.

The Sunday School, thus commenced, increased in interest Sabbath after Sabbath until in June, the same year, Br. Harrell held a protracted meeting in the church from day to day which by the blessing of God resulted in the conversion of some twenty odd persons, eighteen of whom were connected with the Sabbath School at this place....This school is now, today, still in a most prosperous and flourishing condition, drawing sinners to the house of God; and we humbly trust, will continue to be instrumental, in the wisdom of God, in leading the youth of our community to "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>90</sup>



Further information is recorded about the revival meeting:

A protracted meeting was commenced in the church by Bro. W. B. Harrell, a lay member, on June 16th, 1868, and continued from day to day for twelve days. During the time Rev. T. P. Ricaud, of the Methodist church, preached two or three sermons, also Rev. Mr. Wilson of the same church once or twice. Rev. A. J. Battle of the Campbelites twice, in the first days of the meeting. With these exceptions the meeting was held, continued, and carried by Bro. Harrell. The church was greatly revived and strengthened, and some fifteen or more penitent sinners found peace in believing in Jesus. Of this number nine united with the church, and desired baptism at the hands of Bro. Harrell, under whom, by the blessing of God, they had been brought to seek the Lord. Bro. Harrell not being a minister, the church at once voted him a license to preach, and called a presbytery of ministerial brethren for the purpose of his ordination; which matter was attended to on Sabbath, July 12th, 1868, in the church in the presence of a large and solemn concourse of people.<sup>91</sup>

Into a community crippled by the Civil War and religious apathy came this dynamic and devoted person. Under his leadership the church experienced great activity through the Sunday School and the revival meeting. He was the first of two men that the church has ordained to the ministry. In January of 1869, after a stay of only a year in the community, he moved to Lenoir County.<sup>92</sup> When he left the church plunged into inactivity again. The entry recording his dismissal is the last record written in ink and in proper form in the church minute book.<sup>93</sup> In the back of the book out of place and scribbled in pencil are two entries. The first of these is for August of 1870 and records that C. J. Nelson has been called as pastor.<sup>94</sup> At the association that year the church reported only sixteen members.<sup>95</sup> It is the last record that can be found of the church in associational records until 1880. Indeed, this is the last thing that can be found about the Pamlico Association itself. Ever since the Civil War the Pamlico Association had been suffering from inattendance at meetings. In the last year we have any record of the association's activities, there are only twelve churches reporting with less than five-hundred members. Seven ministers were working in the churches.<sup>96</sup> The





the church had joined that year tell the story: "Elder W. B. Knight of Snow Hill, Greene County, N. C. has fallen at his post....He was a noble worker in the Master's cause; he labored faithfully making great sacrifices." <sup>107</sup> The church made no report to the association, and a missionary was requested by the association to "visit Snow Hill and do something, if possible, to revive that church."<sup>108</sup> In February of the next year, 1886, W. J. Fulford became pastor of the church, and J. C. Padelford was chosen clerk.<sup>109</sup> The last penciled entry in the old minute book is dated September 26, 1886.<sup>110</sup> A total of thirty-five names are listed to be transferred to the new minute book.<sup>111</sup> This is an evidence of the church's growth since being reconstituted in 1880.

In 1888 Fulford resigned as pastor to go to another field.<sup>112</sup> He had increased the membership to forty-five and started a Sunday School which unfortunately did not last long. He seems to have been well-liked by the people of the church who relinquished him "with the greatest reluctance and the profoundest regret."<sup>113</sup> A resolution adopted declared: "That since his residence in our midst, in the church and out of the church, in social circles, he has at all times and under all circumstances displayed conspicuously the high qualities and characteristics of the high-toned, consecrated Christian gentleman."<sup>114</sup> The clerk observed: "Brother Blout in introducing these resolutions made a most eloquent and feeling speech causing tears to flow from every eye present."<sup>115</sup> Before he left Fulford "preached his farewell sermon Sunday night to a large and attentive congregation, and many were sad because because they were never to see him again."<sup>116</sup>

When the time came for the association in the following Fall, the church was still without a pastor. The leadership of the church wanted to work out some system whereby they could retain a good man in the pastorate. The messengers to the association were "authorized to insist on the association making anew field of labor to consist of the Baptist churches in Snow





Hill, La Grange, and White Hall."<sup>117</sup>

This was done, and the three churches called G. L. Finch to the field in May of 1889. Snow Hill was to contribute \$60.00 a year on his salary.<sup>118</sup> But the church was having a hard financial struggle: "A report was made... that the amount of contributions for May, June, July, and August has been \$11.19, that the pastor had been paid \$9.69, the care of his horse had been \$2.33 leaving a balance due the treasurer of .83. The salary of the pastor was to be \$5.00 per month which for four months was \$20.00. The amount paid him was \$9.69 leaving a balance of \$10.31 due the pastor for the months of May, June, July, and August."<sup>119</sup>

Times were hard in North Carolina as a contemporary document shows: "There is little money in the hands of the farmers. Almost every farmer is depressed; many are disheartened....the value of land is depreciating."<sup>120</sup> The scarcity of money is also seen when the pastor took an unannounced offering for missions: "The members not being prepared for the call, only fifty cents were raised."<sup>121</sup> In 1890 the State Board of Missions came to the rescue of the church by supplementing the pastor's salary.<sup>122</sup>

Under Finch's capable leadership a steady stream of new members came into the church. Efforts were also made to contact non-resident members about transferring their church membership. This letter was written to absent members:

Dear Sister or Brother,

At a church meeting of the Snow Hill Baptist church held Sunday, Sept. 15th, I was instructed to correspond with all absent members, and to ascertain what were their wishes in regard to continuation of their membership here, and the lives they were living where they were, and to urge upon such members as could not attend church here that they should ask for letters of dismissal, provided they were living Christian lives. The church is anxious to make a correct report to the next association. We trust my dear Brother (or Sister) that you are living the life of the Christian soldier and doing all you can for the cause of Christ. Let us hear from you at once.<sup>123</sup>



The church also continued its stern program of discipline. Nancy P. Mazingo was dismissed "for conduct unbecoming a Christian."<sup>124</sup> A committee was appointed to "see Bro. Daniel McKeel in regard to the life he was living, clerking in a bar-room & to show him the impropriety of such a life."<sup>125</sup> It was reported by the committee that McKeel was unable to perform hard work on account of his physical condition and could find no better way to make a living. "He bore a good character, save the business he was in; and did not wish to be cut off from the church; (and) would get out of the business as soon as he could."<sup>126</sup> In the light of this information the church deferred a decision for further consideration. However, a year later McKeel seems to have fallen into the evil habits of environment and confessed that he was "guilty of conduct unbecoming a Christian....and wished to have his name taken off the church book."<sup>127</sup> The clerk added to the account: "So the Bro. was expelled."<sup>128</sup>

In 1890 the church seems to have ordained another man, W. L. Bilbro. He had been a Free Will Baptist preacher. However, he joined the church and was received into the membership and licensed to preach. Plans were made for his ordination which is not reported.<sup>129</sup> However, he was probably ordained because later associational records show him in Missionary Baptist pastorates.

Finch resigned in 1892,<sup>130</sup> and the church was without a regular pastor until 1895 when W. A. Ferrell accepted the post.<sup>131</sup> The church still owed money to Finch when he left.<sup>132</sup> Ferrell served a year as pastor, and when he left J. W. Rose became pastor.<sup>133</sup> The collection for the pastor at the monthly service was as high as \$16.50.<sup>134</sup> and as low as \$1.00.<sup>135</sup> In 1895 J. B. Williams, Jr. was elected as clerk on the death of his father, J. B. Williams, Sr.,<sup>136</sup> who began the second volume of the minutes and kept them



carefully for many years. He also wrote in beautiful flowing script.

In the last year of the nineteenth century M. P. Davis became the pastor of the Baptist Church in Snow Hill.<sup>137</sup> He found conditions deplorable in the little church which had been without adequate pastoral leadership for around a decade. He immediately set to work in Snow Hill and his three other charges as well as the five missions he started.<sup>138</sup> It was reported to the association in 1899 that "the churches under his care are all in fine spiritual condition, unless it be the one at Snow Hill."<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, this active and devoted man held regular monthly meetings in the church, and for the first time offerings for denominational causes appear periodically in the records. He introduced these offerings even when his own meager salary averaged around \$3.00 a month and at one time was even 39¢.<sup>140</sup>

In 1899 the Snow Hill Church asked the Atlantic Association "for a letter to unite with other churches of the western half of the Atlantic Association in organizing an association at La Grange."<sup>141</sup> This was the Neuse Association of which the church is still a member today. To this association in 1900 the Executive Committee reported: "The work at Snow Hill is not very encouraging, and it is hard for the committee to see much outlook there."<sup>142</sup> Through another year of hard work, however, the situation seems to have improved: "Brother M. P. Davis has been in Greene County for 3 years and has evened the wisdom of good workmen remaining long on a field. There are perhaps more visible results and brighter outlooks from the work in Greene County than all the rest beside."<sup>143</sup>

Davis was especially active in using the Snow Hill Church as a base for establishing missions. Davis preached at Taylor's School House in Bull Head community,<sup>144</sup> and a group went from the church at Snow Hill to help form a church in that section in 1902.<sup>145</sup> This church was named Davis Grove in honor of its founder, and today is the only other missionary





Baptist church in the County. Davis also preached at Union Chapel<sup>146</sup> and Britt's School House.<sup>147</sup>

In Snow Hill he started a Sunday School with A. H. Joyner, Sr. as superintendent.<sup>148</sup> However, it lasted only as long as Davis stayed in the community. A Ladies Aid Society is mentioned in the minutes for the first time.<sup>149</sup> Davis seems to have led the church progressively forward during the years around the turn of the century. He resigned in 1902.<sup>150</sup>

S. W. Olham was called as pastor in 1903.<sup>151</sup> In the same year J. E. Debnam, a school teacher who had recently moved to Snow Hill, was elected clerk.<sup>152</sup> This marked the beginning of Debnam's leadership in the church as clerk and historian intermittently for a period of twenty-one years. A commentary on conditions at that time is seen in the entry: "No services were held this month as the regular day for preaching was rainy."<sup>153</sup>

In the Fall of 1904 the church was again without a pastor at association time. The Executive Committee reported: "Our cause in Greene County is suffering for lack of a man living upon the field."<sup>154</sup> The suggestion was made that the churches in the area combine their resources to erect a parsonage. In December J. H. Boothe "was extended a call to become pastor of this church, and to remain pastor until it is made plain to him or the church that God desires a change."<sup>155</sup> However, for some reason he was not able to preach for the church until the following March of 1905.<sup>156</sup> In June the church elected a trustee "for Snow Hill Church to act jointly with one trustee from Castoria and one from Davis Grove to receive the deed and hold the same for a pastor's house for these three churches."<sup>157</sup> Evidently the suggestion from the association to provide a parsonage had been followed. The parsonage was a frame house located on the main street of Snow Hill. It was reported at the association: "Brother Boothe has





made a real sacrifice on his field in Greene County. He has lived on the Board's appropriation to this field, and the churches have given...to the building of a preacher's home."<sup>158</sup> In 1906 Dr. W. W. Whittington, another great lay leader, was added to the membership of the church.<sup>159</sup>

With the beginning of 1907 Boothe was replaced by N. H. Shepherd as pastor.<sup>160</sup> He began his work by correcting the church role.<sup>161</sup> Throughout the year the church struggled to pay for the parsonage. In order to stay for the next year, the pastor made an application for aid from the State Board.<sup>162</sup> His salary for 1908 was to be "what he collected from the membership."<sup>163</sup>

Meanwhile the church was taking disciplinary action again. "The committee appointed to see the brother who had been walking disorderly reported, and the brother, Walter Taylor, was present, confessed his wrong doing and asked the church to forgive him, which forgiveness was promptly accorded."<sup>164</sup> In another case involving a deacon, the church adopted these resolutions:

Whereas in Timothy, 3rd chapter and 8th verse, it is enjoined that deacons be found blameless--

And whereas, the use of intoxicants is universally condemned, and worthy of blame--

And Whereas, our Brother E. D. Sugg is known to be addicted to this evil habit, thereby bring reproach upon his office and the cause of our Lord and Master:

Therefore--

Be it resolved: that our said Brother Sugg be admonished to stop his habit of drinking to excess, as same is bringing reproach upon this church in particular, and that he be requested to appear before this conference and offer any defense he may have promising to abstain from intoxication.

Be it further Resolved: That in the event our said Brother Sugg does not comply with the above that this church hereby request his resignation as deacon, and in the event such resignation is not tendered in one month that said office is declared, so far as Brother Sugg is concerned, vacant.<sup>165</sup>

During the latter part of 1908 and the first part of 1909 the church was again without a pastor. John R. Carroll, a student at Wake Forest,



accepted a call and remained with the church about six months.<sup>166</sup> In 1910 "Brother (A. I.) Caudle assumed the care of this field in the Spring and has labored carefully.<sup>167</sup> The present Sunday School seems to have been started in 1909, and in 1910 an organ was purchased.<sup>168</sup> In order to raise the money due on the parsonage it appears that a group from the church gave a play in the neighboring villages.<sup>169</sup> The debt seems to have been paid off in 1911 because repair work was done on the church<sup>170</sup> and the pastor's salary raised.<sup>171</sup> In 1911 Caudle resigned, and the church adopted a resolution of appreciation stating: "Whereas the church has greatly prospered under his wise leadership....we wish to express to him as a church our sincere appreciation of the many sacrifices he has made in the church here and for the work accomplished."<sup>173</sup>

Debnam resigned as clerk,<sup>174</sup> and for two years there are no records. However, in 1913 the associational minutes report that field No. 3 consisted of "Snow Hill, Eureka, Davis Grove, Fremont, and Castoria,"<sup>175</sup> and H. F. Lindsay is serving this field.<sup>176</sup> In 1915 W. D. Pridgen was called as pastor.<sup>177</sup> The parsonage was not being used by the pastor, for it appears that it has fallen into a state of disrepair. The church decided to repair the parsonage, and to mortgage and rent it to pay for this repair.<sup>178</sup>

Again in 1916 the church was without a pastor, and remained so for several months. In the Spring J. C. Powell was called as pastor.<sup>179</sup> There are no records for the war years of 1917-18. In 1919 A. L. Brown was the pastor.<sup>180</sup> In that year "the church decided it was best to sell the parsonage."<sup>181</sup> It was sold for \$3,000.00, of which \$500.00 was paid in cash.<sup>182</sup> At the first of 1921 R. I. Corbett was called as pastor.<sup>183</sup> In 1921 R. A. Mewborn became an active leader by his election as treasurer and clerk.<sup>184</sup> With the coming of a new year in 1923 Corbet resigned, and A. L. Turner was



called as pastor.<sup>185</sup> In that year a settlement for the balance due on the parsonage was made. The purchaser owed the church \$1,150.00 and agreed to "settle if the church would accept \$900.00 as settlement in full. The property being sold in inflated times, a motion was made (and carried) to accept his offer."<sup>186</sup> Under Turner's leadership the church began meeting for two Sundays a month.<sup>187</sup> He resigned with the close of 1925,<sup>188</sup> and in the Spring of 1926 J. D. Howell was called as pastor.<sup>189</sup>

At the beginning of 1927 C. W. Blanchard became the pastor of the church.<sup>190</sup> Blanchard was an elderly man who came out of retirement to become pastor of the church. He visited a great deal in his pastoral work and was much beloved by the people. The first Homecoming Day for the church was held in the fall of 1927. On that day forty-two of the church's sixty-one members were present. Clerk Debnam read a short history of the church and Dr. Whittington made an address about the church's present program.<sup>191</sup> With the beginning of 1928 "the church extended an indefinite call to C. W. Blanchard as pastor"<sup>192</sup> in contrast with the annual call system which the church had used for so many years. During Blanchard's pastoral tenure the financial aspect of church life greatly improved with the making of regular reports to the church. The Sunday School and the Woman's Missionary Society were very active during these years, and a Baptist Young People's Union was started.<sup>193</sup> Blanchard resigned at the close of 1929.<sup>194</sup>

R. F. Israel was called in 1930 as pastor of the Snow Hill Church as well as of Davis Grove, Eureka, and Fremont Churches.<sup>195</sup> With the advent of the Depression the church got behind in paying his salary, and it was decided to cut it in half to \$300.00 annually.<sup>196</sup> At a fellowship meeting of the church in 1930 to raise funds for the pastor's salary, Clerk Debnam read another short history of the church which he had prepared.<sup>197</sup> Under





Israel's leadership regular quarterly church conferences were held and financial and organizational reports given.<sup>198</sup> The Sunday School and B. Y. P. U. grew to such an extent that the church rented a nearby dwelling to care for the over-flow from the one-room church building.<sup>199</sup> At a revival in 1932 nineteen people were added to the church membership.<sup>200</sup>

At this point there is a note in the church minutes which reads: "Unfortunately here is a break in the church record. The clerk, J. E. Debnam, owing to business worries and failing health, failed to make the proper entries."<sup>201</sup> The note adds that Israel left in 1933 after having served the church for four years, and that N. E. Gresham, a schoolteacher from Pinetops, was called in 1934 to serve as supply pastor. The note which was written in August tells how the clerk gave up his work in the Sunday School and B. Y. P. U.<sup>202</sup> This is the last typed entry in the minute book, and marks the closing of a chapter in the church minutes which Debnam had typed up from 1850.

The next month Debnam died, and the next entry in the minute book is his memorial adopted by the church. Extracts from it show the value and influence of his life:

Brother Debnam loved his God, his neighbor, his church and his family. He was for many years a dynamic force in the church, the Sunday School, B. Y. P. U. and all of its other allied organizations. He likewise, in his every-day life, upheld those lofty principles of Christian manhood and gentlemanly conduct....He was, until he became physically disabled, in the front line of battle, a leader in this congregation in all important undertakings. During the thirty years he lived in Greene County, in public office, as auditor, and in private life, he ever espoused the cause of righteousness, light and truth. He wrought well in the field of education in helping to give to the youth of the County a heritage of which they may boast....He not only challenged the cause of right, but he fought vigorously and unwaveringly the forces of intemperance and evil...<sup>203</sup> because he believed that the things he upheld were right.

Mrs. Debnam was elected by the church to continue her husband's work as clerk.<sup>204</sup>





The appropriation from the State Board was cut as the pastor was no longer living upon the field.<sup>205</sup> Gresham served the church by preaching once a month until the middle of 1935.<sup>206</sup> Then C. H. Caswell was soon called by Snow Hill and the other churches with the help of the State Mission Board.<sup>207</sup> For that year the contributions were \$355.36, and the membership was eighty-seven.<sup>208</sup> For the next several years the church seems to have maintained its ground with some slight advances.

Dr. W. W. Whittington died in June of 1939. Extracts from his memorial also show the contribution of his Christian life to the church and to the community:

Even in his years of declining health, he never gave up his search for information. He made a practice of arising early, often long before dawn, and devoting the best hours of the day to studying. A great deal of this early morning studying was given to the Bible, the book that he loved best....

Dr. Whittington loved and honored his God, and he made an effort to know his word and to obey his commandments. He tried to live as his Master taught men to live, doing unto others as he would have them do unto him....

He was a devout member of the Baptist Church, faithful in attendance, active in its organizations, and loyal to its financial support....He never flinched from taking a stand upon public questions, and in everyday life, he upheld the lofty principles of Christian living and gentlemanly conduct.

He was a big-hearted man, with an understanding of human nature and human weakness, and a desire to help those in need. These qualities added to his untiring efforts, made him what he was--a greatly beloved country doctor--whose services were always in demand and whose place will be hard to fill.<sup>209</sup>

In the third decade of the twentieth century, the church lost two of its outstanding lay leaders. A. B. Alderman and Roscoe Bunn now came to the forefront in lay leadership. However, the church began a decline during the latter part of Cashwell's pastorate.

In 1939 inclinations of an awakening were seen when plans were begun for a building program when it was "Resolved that the Snow Hill Baptist Church undertake to repair, renovate and reposition on the present



site their church building and build class rooms to meet the needs of teaching of the church at the present time."<sup>210</sup> The Building Committee was composed of E. V. Vestal, R. A. Mewborn, E. A. Rasberry, Miss Minnie Mae Whittington, and Mrs. J. E. Debnam.<sup>211</sup>

The 1939 report to the association shows the condition of the church:

"The house of worship is a one room wooden building....Our time of preaching is every 3rd Sunday, morning and evening....No revival services were conducted last year....No tithers and no families taking Biblical Recorder....The total membership reported last year was 83. Additions this year....none....Lost this year....one."<sup>212</sup> Fifty-seven were enrolled in the Sunday School with an average attendance of twenty-five. The total gifts of the church amounted to \$508.86.<sup>213</sup> With the close of 1939 "Mr. Cashwell stated that the time had arrived when he felt that it would be best for him to make a change in his work....He said that it had been impossible for him to do as much personal and pastoral work on the field as he desired to do because of the distance between the churches he served and his home in Wendell, and limited finances."<sup>214</sup> For the last time "application was made to the State Board for assistance."<sup>215</sup>

In early 1940 a new field of churches was formed to include Snow Hill, Davis Grove, La Grange, and Grangers Churches. T. Sloan Guy was called as pastor and moved to Snow Hill.<sup>216</sup> Even though the church was still fourth-time, his presence in the community was a great incentive to further development. Guy was asked to serve as Chairman of the Building Committee.<sup>217</sup> "All were agreed that the church is badly in need of a larger building and were in favor of making investigations and plans to build as early as possible."<sup>218</sup> It was decided to move the one-room frame building to a position nearer the paved street.<sup>219</sup> This new location was given to the church by the



town because it had become apparent that the town would never make a street of it as had been previously planned. An act of the State Legislature was necessary to confirm the grant by the town. The old building which was built in 1860 was brick-veneered and enlarged by the addition of eight Sunday School rooms. The construction work began in October of 1940. While the building was being erected, worship services were held in the Methodist Church, and the Sunday School met in the Community House.<sup>220</sup>

During the building program the church struggled with financial difficulties. At one time "it was made known by the pastor that all building funds have been exhausted, and that it was necessary to have money the following week if the work on the building was carried on."<sup>221</sup> Money was taken from the general fund to meet the emergency,<sup>222</sup> and later a loan of \$2,500.00 was negotiated.<sup>223</sup> The building was completed in late 1941,<sup>224</sup> fortunately before the shortages caused by the Second World War.

In May of 1942 Guy announced his resignation.<sup>225</sup> Under his leadership the church has experienced a great awakening. Membership had increased to one-hundred three,<sup>226</sup> and a new building had been erected and partially paid for. Mrs. Guy, who was an able assistant and much beloved by all the people, began the first choir. When Guy first came to the church as pastor, it was reported the "Dr. (B. W.) Spillman says that Mr. Guy is working miracles on his field of churches."<sup>227</sup> In the Snow Hill Church he certainly laid the foundations for that church's future growth. His pastorate marks the beginning of the church's awakening realization of its full potentialities.

A little over a year after Guy left, the pastorless church in 1943 called B. L. Davis, a nearby school teacher.<sup>228</sup> Gradually during the next two years the church labored to pay off the debt on the building. At the





beginning of 1945 the debt was paid, and on April 15 of that year the building was dedicated at a homecoming service.<sup>229</sup> Meanwhile, the pastor had become the County Superintendent of Schools and offered his resignation, but the church asked him to continue his work on a quarter time basis.<sup>230</sup>

Soon after the new building had been dedicated, the church experienced enough growth in activity to feel the need of expanding the basement of the educational building.<sup>231</sup> This and other work on the church building and grounds for the next few years was done under the leadership of A. J. Harrell, treasurer of the church. R. A. Mewborn served as Chairman of the Board of Deacons most of the time while Davis was pastor. The membership of the church as gradually increased through the pastor's efforts. A Training Union was also started. The women's work made great strides under the general leadership of Mrs. Robert Christman. In 1950 the first Vacation Bible School was held.<sup>232</sup> In 1951 Davis reported to the congregation that "he felt that he did not have sufficient time to give the church work and that he was willing to resign at any time."<sup>233</sup> The next month Davis told the church that "he felt that the best course for him to take was to resign as pastor of our church. The resignation was accepted in order to get a pastor who could devote more time to the church work."<sup>234</sup>

Davis served the church well as pastor for eight years, the longest pastorate in the history of the church. The last associational report of his pastorate shows that the church membership had increased to one-forty-five. The financial report indicated that \$1,854.83 had been given for that associational year, 1951.<sup>235</sup> While Davis was pastor, Mrs. F. C. Albritton served as church clerk.

In 1952 Snow Hill and La Grange Churches united to form a field and to call a pastor to serve them both half-time.<sup>236</sup> It was arranged that the new pastor would live at the parsonage in La Grange. In June of 1952





Alexander Pasetti was called to the field.<sup>237</sup> During his pastorate services were held every Sunday in the Snow Hill Church with an alternation between morning and evening. Mrs. Pasetti was chosen as pianist and choir director.<sup>238</sup> W. S. Butler became church treasurer,<sup>239</sup> and Broughton Beaman was elected clerk.<sup>240</sup>

The church soon set up a system for the rotation of deacons,<sup>241</sup> and W. S. Butler was elected the new Chairman<sup>242</sup> replacing R. A. Mewborn who had served faithfully for many years. A fund to be used to erect a parsonage was set up in 1953 when Mrs. J. E. Debnam made an initial gift as the repayment of a loan to her husband during the Depression by the church from the money received from the sale of the old parsonage.<sup>243</sup> In August of that year the pastor asked the church members to "seriously pray and think about"<sup>244</sup> being a full-time church. The clerk recorded that "since it is his opinion we are capable and ready for it, we should start making steps toward that as our goal. His thought for us to put to use was to cast aside fear and put on more faith."<sup>245</sup>

The unified budget system was also adopted to replace separate Sunday School and church budgets.<sup>246</sup> A new organ was purchased in 1954. In August of that year "the question of a full-time program, or to build Sunday School rooms was put before the church."<sup>247</sup> Some members thought the most immediate need was an enlargement of the building while others felt that a full-time program was needed next. Pasetti asked the church to go full-time. When no action was taken, Pasetti tendered his resignation in September of 1954 to go to serve another church.<sup>248</sup>

During his two year pastorate Pasetti was instrumental in gaining many new members for the church. The membership reached one-hundred seventy-one while one-hundred eighty-six were enrolled in the Sunday



School. Church gifts increased to the amount of \$5,783.92 for the year.<sup>249</sup>

The church was again without a pastor until February of 1955 when B. E. White, Jr. was called as pastor. The clerk recorded: "At a previous meeting...the church in conference voted to go on a full-time basis.... Later Rev. Brightie White, from the Seminary at Wake Forest, was called as our supply pastor. During the time we were searching for a full-time pastor, and after hearing a seminary student for two months, we have seen his interest in the young people and his appeal to them as well as to the adults, many members expressed their desire for Mr. White and the seminary program. The deacons, believing this to be the desire of many, met... and voted to recommend to the church the seminary plan."<sup>250</sup> The recommendation was accepted and White was called as pastor.

In 1955 the name of the church was changed to the First Baptist Church of Snow Hill.<sup>251</sup> The church was originally named in 1850 "the Baptist Church of Snow Hill."<sup>252</sup> Since then it came to be known as "Snow Hill Baptist Church." The name of the cornerstone of the sanctuary is "First Baptist Church." Hence this was chosen as the name for the church to be known by.

The debt on the new organ was also paid off, and an old one repaired. A Building Program Contact Committee was appointed to consult the Sunday School Board for advice about the church's building needs,<sup>253</sup> and a group from the church went to Ridgecrest to talk with the Church Architectural Department of the Board. With the advent of the new church year, a budget of \$8,000.00 was drawn up.<sup>254</sup> A vesper service was also started in the Fall.<sup>255</sup>

A plan for the church building program based on the Sunday School Board's recommendations was also adopted in the Fall of 1955 to include three phases: "(1) An educational building; (2) A parsonage not located



on the present church property; (3) A renovation of the church sanctuary with necessary additions."<sup>256</sup> The Parsonage Fund collections were terminated by bringing it to \$2,500.00 by an addition from the general treasury, and the Educational Building Fund was started in order to erect a building as soon as possible.<sup>257</sup> A Building Committee was appointed to include Broughton Beaman, Chairman, and W. S. Butler, Mrs. Robert Christman, R. A. Mewborn, Miss Minnie Mae Whittington, A. J. Harrell, Mrs. Elias Hart, Edward Sugg, Mrs. J. A. Dobson, and Floyd Jenkins.<sup>258</sup>

The expanding program of the church brought the realization of the great need for a new educational building. Under Superintendent W. H. Murray the Sunday School enrollment reached the high mark of two-hundred four in the fall quarter of 1955, with an average attendance of one-hundred forty-four and the largest attendance of one-hundred sixty-eight. The enthusiasm of the people for a new building has been shown by their contribution of over \$3,000.00 in this quarter in addition to their regular gifts.

"The First Baptist Church of Snow Hill began its 106th year of Christian service on the first Sunday in January. The first annual Founder's Day was held to commemorate the establishment of the church on January 5, 1850. A history of the church was read by Pastor Brightie E. White, Jr., after which the church renewed the covenant drawn up by the founders. After the Vesper Service a reception was held to honor the twenty-two new members who joined the church during the past year. This program of information and inspiration gleaned from the past has been accepted by the church as a challenge for greater growth and service in the year ahead."<sup>259</sup>

The conclusion of the paper on the history of the church stated:

The First Baptist Church of Snow Hill has had an impressive history. Across the pages of the record book we



read of noble men and women who gave themselves in selfless Christian service, but we also cannot fail to notice the indifference of a large part of the congregation. Like all churches this one had had periods of progress and growth as well as declines and times of inactivity. Throughout its history the church has suffered because of lack of leadership, offerings sufficient to carry on an aggressive program, and enough room to properly train the youth. During recent years the church has experienced new growth, but after 105 years of existence it is still not a full-time church. In the 106th year of this church's history we expect to reach this goal. On the first annual Founder's Day let us dedicate ourselves anew to this purpose and to our Lord and His church.<sup>260</sup>

From an examination of the history of this typically small church in an agricultural village of eastern North Carolina, an analysis of Baptist life in many small towns for the last hundred years can be drawn. From the drama of a small struggling church trying to conduct a local program and to cooperate with other Baptist churches in an association, some valuable conclusions can be arrived at.

As one studies the records of the past he is impressed with the responsibility and opportunity of the clerk in a church. He is like one of the ancient chroniclers in Old Testament days recording the events of the present for the benefit and inspiration of the future. Whenever the clerk has failed to make the proper entries or has been careless in the keeping of writing of the minutes, there is a dark spot in knowing and understanding the history of the church. Records are important. The past holds the key to the present. A particular church situation can be understood whenever one can study the events in the past that have molded its character and attitude.

Another important aspect of the developement of a church is seen in its program of education and missions. These two things are the life-line of a church. In Greene County today there are two Primitive Baptist





churches and two Missionary Baptist churches. In 1854 the Old Meadow Primitive Baptist Church reported to the Contentnea Association of which it was a member that its membership was thirty people.<sup>261</sup> In 1952 the same church reported to the same association that its membership was eight persons.<sup>262</sup> In 1858 Newborn's Primitive Baptist Church reported to that same association that its membership was thirty-one.<sup>263</sup> In 1952 it reported a membership of twenty-two.<sup>264</sup> In the approximate hundred years of this study these churches which have vehemently opposed education and missions have declined in membership and vitality. On the other hand, the two Missionary Baptist churches which have accented education and missions have grown and are still growing. To the Neuse Association in 1955 the First Baptist Church of Snow Hill reported a membership of one-hundred seventy-two<sup>265</sup> while the Davis Grove Church reported one-hundred twenty-six.<sup>266</sup> Both of these churches have experienced tremendous growth when compared with their humble beginnings.

The importance of competent pastoral leadership is also evident. The progress of the church has been blighted by short pastorates, some of only months and others of just a year. Of course, the annual call system has been in a measure responsible for this. Whenever the church has had a competent minister who has spent some time on the field in pastoral work there has been growth and progress. The church has also suffered from having to share its minister with several other churches. With one pastor serving this one church, a great deal of progress has been made in one short year.

Not only can the importance of competent pastoral leadership be seen but also the need for a dedicated lay leadership is evident. The minister is only temporary in a church situation which the laymen who live in a



community are usually permanent. The church of a community belongs to the people who constitute it, and it is their responsibility to see to its well-being. Whenever there has been an active, responsible, and united lay leadership, the program of the church has been impressive. When the laymen have failed, the church has failed.

The First Baptist Church of Snow Hill, although blessed with many capable lay leaders, has suffered by inattendance and financial laxity in church support. Without the help of the State Mission Board the church would have perished long ago, and if any church ever owed a debt to missions, this one does and should be most active in the missionary work of aiding other struggling churches. For an active church there must be active laymen who practice Christian stewardship in their church attendance and financial giving.

Another lesson from the past is the importance of the ideal of a regenerated church membership. In the early years of its history the church examined candidates for membership to determine their fitness. For example, in 1850 the first new member of the church, Mrs. A. H. Dowell, "appeared before the church and related her Christian experience. She was questioned...as to her religious life, and the several points of doctrine which we as a denomination maintain and believe. Therefore, having conformed to our established usage by appearing before the testifying to the church what the Lord had done for soul, she was duly received as a candidate for baptism."<sup>267</sup> In 1868 another candidate "related the state of her mind and hopes, in traveling from the kingdom of nature to that of grace. Her hope in Jesus being satisfactorily declared"<sup>268</sup> she was received into the church. Not only was the church careful in the reception of members but also a determined effort was made to keep the church morally



purified by disciplining wandering members. "Expelled for conduct unbecoming a Christian" is a familiar phrase in the church minutes. New pastors coming into the church often made a survey to discover the active members and to weed out the inactive ones from the role. Although today our concepts about entrance requirements and church disciplines have changed, we will do well also to try to maintain the ideal of a regenerate church membership.

The First Baptist Church of Snow Hill has had an impressive history and presents a hopeful future. Yet too often the church has had the attitude of the group who wrote the association in 1851, "Brethern, we are a feeble band."<sup>269</sup> The hope for progress in the future history of the church lies in the advance of one of its pastors who declared that the church needed "to cast our fear and put on more faith."<sup>270</sup>





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## APPENDIX





# I. TABLE OF PASTORS

Harley Minor	1850-1852
Parrott Mewborn	1852
Harley Minor	1854-
E. A. Best	1856-1857
H. Spivey	1857
E. A. Brachum	1858-
H. Spivey	1859-1866
James H. Freeman	1867-1868
C. J. Nelson	1870
J. W. Potter	1871
W. B. Knight	1881-1884
W. J. Fulford	1886-1888
C. S. Cashwell	1888-1889
G. L. Finch	1889-1892
W. A. Ferrell	1895-
J. W. Rose	1896-1897
M. P. Davis	1899-1902
S. W. Oldham	1902-
J. H. Boothe	1904-1906
N. H. Shepherd	1906-1908
John B. Carroll	1908
N. H. Shepherd	1909
A. F. Caudle	1910-1911-
N. P. Stallings	1911
H. F. Lindays	1914
W. D. Pridgen	1914-1916
J. C. Powell	1916-1917
A. L. Brown	1919-
R. I. Corbet	1921-1922
A. L. Turner	1923-1926
J. D. Harrell	1926-1927
C. W. Blanchard	1927-1929
F. L. Israel	1930-1933
N. E. Gresham	1934-1935
C. H. Cashwell	1935-1939
T. Sloan Guy	1940-1942
B. L. Davis	1942-1951
Alexander Pasetti	1952-1954
B. E. White, Jr.	1955-



## II. TABLE OF CLERKS

A. H. Dowell	1850-1854
Jonathan Wood	1854-1861
W. R. Croom	1861-1881
E. D. Sugg	1881-1883
J. C. Pedalford	1886-1888
J. B. Williams, Sr.	1888-1895
J. B. Williams, Jr.	1895-1900
T. D. Hackney	1900-1902
Parham Taylor	1902-1903
J. E. Debnam	1903-1912
J. P. Poyd	1914-1915
T. C. Carlton	1916-1921
R. A. Mewborn	1922-1927
J. E. Debnam	1927-1934
Mrs. J. E. Debnam	1934-1941
Richard Christman	1941-1942
J. W. McKee	1942-1943
Mrs. F. C. Albritton	1943-1952
John B. Beaman	1952-



### III. TABLE OF ASSOCIATIONS

Union Association	1850-1852
Pamlico Association	1852-1870
Eastern Association	1881-1884
Atlantic Association	1885-1898
Neuse Association	1899-



# IV. TABLE OF ASSOCIATIONAL REPORTS AT APPROXIMATE FIVE YEAR INTERVALS

Year	Church Membership	S. S. Enrollment	Contributions
1850	9		\$5.20
1856	9		6.00
1860	13		3.00
1865	25		2.00
1870	16		1.00
1881	12		
1884	20	30	52.00
1890	44		153.00
1895	47		80.25
1899	24		
1907	37		418.50
1910	42	84	364.84
1915	46	33	163.78
1920	28	13	
1925	45		195.00
1930	72	123	944.54
1935	87	64	488.61
1940	99	58	713.52
1945	89	63	2,127.94
1950	140	124	1,803.89
1955-	172	180	7,687.76





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